



Qādī Abu Bakr Ibn Al-‘Arabī Al-Mālīkī on the *Mujassima*¹

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[The Imām, the Mujtahid, the Muḥaqqiq,² Ibn Al-‘Arabī Al-Mālīkī, may Allah have mercy on him, said in his book *Al-‘Awāṣim min Al-Qawāṣim*:]

Qāṣima:

We have made it clear in more than one place that those who conspire against Islam are many and those who are negligent towards it are many, while its friends³ who are preoccupied with it are few. Those who conspire against it include:

Al-Bāṭiniyya, and we have already explained all of their states.

Those who conspire against it also include *Al-Zāhiriyya*, and they consist of two groups:

The first are those who follow the outward (*ẓāhir*) in creed and foundations (*uṣūl*).

The second are those who follow the outward in foundations only.

Both of these groups, in their foundation, are wretched filth (*khābītha*), and what has branched out from both of them is also wretched filth, for indeed the bastard child is just a toy and a snake can only give birth to a snake.

The group which takes the outward in creed are on the edge of likening Allah to His creation (*tashbīh*), like the former in denying Allah’s creation (*ta‘ṭīl*), and I was tested by them on my

¹ Translated from *Al-‘Awāṣim min Al-Qawāṣim*, (Cairo: Dar Al-Turāth) p.208-213

² (tn): i.e. verifier, investigator

³ (tn): Ar. *awliyā’*

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travels and they interfered with me greatly, against my wishes. I mostly saw them in Egypt, the Levant (*Shām*) and Baghdad.

They say: ‘Indeed Allah knows better than us regarding Himself, His Attributes and His creations, and He is our teacher, so when He informs us of a matter we believe in it as He has informed us and we believe in it as He has commanded.’

When they hear: **“What are they waiting for but for Allah to come to them in the shadows of the clouds, together with the angels...”**⁴ and **“And your Lord arrives with the angels rank upon rank”**⁵ and **“...And Allah came at their building from the foundations...”**⁶ and **“Our Lord descends to the lowest sky every night...”**⁷ they say that He moves, transfers, and comes and goes from one place to another.

When they hear His statement: **“The All-Merciful, established firmly upon the Throne”**⁸ they say that He is sitting on it, that He is attached to it and He is bigger than it by four finger-lengths, as it is not valid for Him to be smaller than it, because He is The Most Great (*Al-‘Azīm*). Also, it is not like Him because **“There is nothing like unto Him”**⁹, and thus He is bigger than the Throne¹⁰ by four finger-lengths.

A group of Sunnis in the city of Salām¹¹ have informed me about what Al-Ustādh Abū Al-Qāsim ‘Abdul Karīm Ibn Hawāzin Al-Qushayrī Al-Ṣūfī from Nīsābūr mentioned. He organised a gathering of *dhikr* and the whole creation was present. Then the reciter read: **“The All-Merciful, established firmly upon the Throne.”** The most distinguished of them said to me: ‘I saw – i.e. the Ḥanbalīs – standing during the gathering and saying: “Sitting! Sitting!”¹² with the loudest and farthest reaching voices. The Sunnis from amongst Al-Qushayrī’s companions became furious at them, as well as the others present, and the two groups became enraged at each other. The majority overwhelmed them and forced them into the Nizāmiyya School and detained them therein. Then they pelted them with various objects and some of

⁴ (tn): Al-Baqara 2:210

⁵ (tn): Al-Fajr 89:22

⁶ (tn): Al-Naḥl 16:26

⁷ (tn): *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and other collections.

⁸ (tn): Ṭaha 20:5

⁹ (tn): Al-Shūrā 42:11

¹⁰ (tn): Ar. *Al-‘Arsh*

¹¹ (tn): i.e. Baghdad

¹² (tn): Ar. *qā‘idun*

them died. The leader of the group rode off as well as some of their teachers, and thus they silenced their revolution and put out their flame.

They say that He speaks with letters and a voice, and they attribute it to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Their falsehood causes them to go as far as saying that the letters are pre-eternal (*qadīm*)!

They say that He possesses a hand, fingers, a forearm, an arm, a hip, a leg and a foot, with which He walks wherever He wants. They also say that He laughs, walks and walks quickly.

I have been informed by one my sheikhs whom I trust that Abū Ya‘lā Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥusayn Al-Farā’¹³ – the head of the Ḥanbalīs in Baghdad – when mentioning Allah the Exalted, as well as these literal interpretations that have been mentioned regarding His Attributes, would say: ‘Impose upon me what you will, for indeed I adhere to it, apart from the beard and nakedness.’!

They conclude by saying: ‘If someone wants to know Allah, let him look at himself, for indeed Allah is in His eyes, except that Allah is transcendent above banes, pre-eternal without a beginning and everlasting without end. This is due to the statement of the Prophet, may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him: **“Indeed Allah created Adam in His image (*ṣūra*)”** and in another narration: **“In the image of the All-Merciful”**, which is *ṣaḥīḥ*. Thus, Allah indeed has a face (*wajh*), and we do not negate it and we do interpret it any way that would lead to impossibilities that the intellect cannot accept.’

The head of this group in the Levant was Abū Faraj Al-Ḥanbalī in Damascus, Ibn Al-Rumaylī, the *muḥaddith*, in Jerusalem, Al-Qatrawānī in the area of Nablus, Al-Fākhūrī in Egypt, and Abū Ḥusayn Ibn Abī Ya‘lā Al-Farā’ represented them in Baghdād. Each one of them has followers from amongst the laity, a large number, [they are] a band rebelling against the truth and in partisanship against the creation.

If they had the ability to understand and they had been endowed with some knowledge of the Dīn of Islam, they would have restrained themselves due to the incoherence of their statements and the general falsehood of what they say, but mental retardation¹⁴ has overwhelmed them and thus they don’t have hearts with which to understand, nor eyes with

¹³ (tn): i.e. the Elder

¹⁴ (tn): Ar. *fidāma*

which to see or ears with which to hear. They are like cattle, but even more astray.¹⁵ I have been informed by more than one person that Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Al-Isfarāyīnī went out to meet his companions one day and he was very happy, so they asked him why. He responded: ‘I debated with a layman today and I defeated him.’ It was then said to him: ‘You defeated a widow.’¹⁶ How can you rejoice at defeating the laity?’ He said: ‘The scholar is held back by his knowledge, his intellect and his Dīn, while the layman is not held back by any understanding or Dīn, and thus I only defeat him rarely and occasionally.’

Al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said: ‘I will tell you something strange. Indeed I have not come across a group without finding something in their positions that I agree with – and Allah has protected me with his *tawfiq* from looking further into it – except for the *Bāṭiniyya* and those who liken Allah to His creation. Indeed they are a horde of whom I am convinced have no knowledge behind them. I discarded their statements as soon as I heard them, whereas with other groups one has to think rationally and legally about the evidence required until the intellect and law guide one to the source of salvation.’¹⁷

Our companion, Abū Maṣṣūr Sātkīn Al-Turkī, a resident of a military outpost, and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdul ‘Azīz, the Qāḍī of Al-Baskara in the east, were once with us, and they had been given the ability to understand and had been endowed with intelligence and nobility. However, the companionship of Ibn Al-Manānī had overwhelmed them and they had chosen the *madhhab* of the Qadariyya.¹⁸ I entered upon him¹⁹ and he was happy to see me. He asked me about my creed and I told him. He said: ‘What has prevented you from adopting the creed of the truth from the *madhhab* of the people of *tawḥīd* (meaning himself and his companions from the Qadariyya) and it is a *madhhab* that goes from Ibn Al-Faraj back to Abū Al-Ḥusayn, to ‘Abdul Jabbār, to Abī Hāshim, to Al-Jubā’ī, to the family of ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, may Allah be pleased with him, and then to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah’s prayers and peace be upon him?’ I thus learned that he had delved into the inward,²⁰ adhered to Ahl Al-Bayt and adopted the *madhhab* of the Qadariyya as a cloak, and this was in opposition to his father, may Allah be pleased with him, who was called “The Believer of Pharaoh’s Household” by Al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn Al-Ṭayyib, as he was a Ḥanafī in his branches²¹ and an Ash‘arī in his foundations.²² Not a single Ḥanafī is

¹⁵ (tn): This is a paraphrase of Al-‘A‘rāf 7:179

¹⁶ (tn): i.e. someone who is defenseless

¹⁷ (tn): or safety

¹⁸ (tn): This group believed that man had absolute free will, independent of Allah’s will.

¹⁹ (tn): i.e. Al-Manānī

²⁰ (tn): Ar. *tabaṭṭana al-bāṭin*, i.e. he had joined the Bāṭiniyya.

²¹ (tn): Ar. *furū‘*, i.e. fiqh

seen in Khurāsān or Iraq except that he is a Mu‘tazilī or Karrāmī,²³ with the exception of those beyond the river²⁴ in Balkh, for indeed as far as those lands are populated the people are Sunni and are upon a path more faithful to the truth. I stood up and left him, and he was a luminary in fiqh. I heard him speaking in the Masjid of Al-Manṣūr with [Imam] Al-Shāshī regarding the issue of giving a ruling for someone who is absent²⁵ and I saw a man who indeed gave the evidences regarding the matters of rulings and used them according to the Iraqi way.

²² (tn): Ar. *uṣūl*, i.e. creed

²³ (tn): Ar. *Al-Karrāmiyya*: the followers of Abū ‘Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Karrām (d.255 AH). They affirmed Allah’s attributes but fell into anthropomorphism and likening Allah to His creation. Please see *Al-Milal wa Al-Niḥal* by Imam Al-Shahrastānī (v.1) for further details.

²⁴ (tn): i.e. the Euphrates

²⁵ (tn): i.e. not present in court and/or missing